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A 2020 file photo of the Indian Army handing over 13 yaks and four calves that strayed across the Line of Actual Control in east Arunachal Pradesh, to China | PTI

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US SAYS IT RECOGNISES ARUNACHAL PRADESH AS INDIA'S INTEGRAL PART

US opposes any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by renaming areas, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said

CHINA CLAIMS IT'S STANDARDISING NAMES

China on Wednesday justified the act of renaming. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said: "Zangnan (Chinese name for Arunachal) is part of China. In accordance with relevant stipulations of the administration of geographical names of the State Council, competent authorities of the Chinese govt have standardised the names of some parts of Zangnan"

ALWAYS REJECTED CHINESE CLAIMS, SAYS US

- Reiterating its stand on Arunchal Pradesh, the US said that Washington has always recognised the territory as an integral part of India
- "This is something that we have long stood by," Jean-Pierre told reporters on Wednesday
- On Tuesday, India had outrightly rejected China's renaming of places

32

NUMBER OF INDIAN AREAS CHINA HAS RENAMED IN THREE PHASES SINCE 2017

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Oppn gambit to rein in CBI, ED fails in SC

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a plea by 14 Opposition parties against the alleged misuse of Central law enforcing agencies like the CBI and ED by the Union government against political opponents. The pleas filed by the Congress, TMC, AAP, JMM, JDU, BRS, RJD, SP, Uddhav faction of the Shiv Sena, NC, NCP, CPI, CPM and DMK had urged the court to lay down guidelines for law enforcing agencies and courts on remand, arrest and bail.

"Political leaders stand absolutely on the same footing as that of the citizens of the country. They are entitled to the same protection of due process of law and they are not entitled to higher immunity. When you say that the space of the Opposition is being crunched, the answer to that lies in the political space and not in the court," a bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justice J B Pardiwala remarked.

Noting that the data highlighted in the plea "only pertained to politicians", the court said laying down general principles of law which would also be applicable to ordinary citizens would be a dangerous proposition in the absence of specific facts.

The moment you say 'democracy, basic structure, skewed application of law to political leaders', then this plea is essentially for politicians. You can't say that political leaders have no access to courts

- SC bench

Arguing the joint plea before the court, senior advocate A M Singhvi said the alarming rise of incidents of wanton arrest of opposition political figures by the CBI/ED has a chilling effect on constitutionally protected activities, making the democratic playing field uneven. he said the Opposition together represents 42.57% of the vote share in the 2019 general elections for the Lok Sabha, adding if the political leaders of these parties are affected, the people in their constituency will also be affected.

The Opposition had urged the court to lay down a triple test — determination as to whether a person is a flight risk, whether there is a reasonable apprehension of the tampering of evidence, or the influencing/intimidation of witnesses — for police officers/ ED officials and courts. In case the pleas are not satisfied, the parties urged the court to lay down alternatives like interrogation for fixed hours or at most house arrest.

Sensing the bench's disinclination to consider the plea, Singhvi sought permission to withdraw the petition, which was granted.

Criticism of govt isn't anti-establishment: SC

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday lit into the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for invoking national security out of 'thin air' to deny broadcasting rights to Malayalam channel Media One, adding criticism of the government cannot be termed anti-establishment.

Directing the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) to renew the channel's broadcasting permission within four weeks, a bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justice Hima Kohli said non renewal falls within the purview of restriction on freedom of press.

"The critical views of the Channel, Media-One on policies of the government cannot be termed, 'anti-establishment'... The action of the MIB by denying a security clearance to a media channel on the basis of the views which the channel is constitutionally entitled to hold produces a chilling effect on free speech, and in particular on press freedom. Criticism of governmental policy can by no stretch of imagination be brought withing the fold of any of the grounds stipulated in Article 19(2)."

Dwelling on the independence of the press, the court said the government has to accept criticism and cannot expect all sections of the media to take a homogenised view. "An independent press is vital for the robust functioning of a democratic republic... The press has a duty to speak truth to power... The restriction on the freedom of the press compels citizens to think along the same tangent. A homogenised view on issues that range from socio-economic polity to political ideologies would pose grave dangers to democracy."

MEDIA One

Hits out at sealed cover procedure

Criticising the sealed cover procedure accepted by the high court, the bench said, to give intelligence reports absolute immunity from disclosure is antithetical to a transparent and accountable system

Since security clearance was denied because of the channel promoters' alleged link with Jamaat e Islami Hind, the court termed the allegations fallacious. It also said that the non-disclosure of reasons for denial of security clearance by MHA and disclosure only to court in a sealed cover violated the principles of natural justice and the right to fair proceedings, leaving the company to fight in the dark.

Key suspect in Kerala train fire arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kozhikode/Kannur

SHAHRUKH Saifi, 30, the key suspect in the Kerala train arson case, has been nabbed from Ratnagiri in Maharashtra by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad. He was handed over to Kerala police on Wednesday.

Shahrukh Saifi

Saifi was picked up from Ratnagiri railway station around 11.30 pm on Tuesday when he was on the run after fleeing from the Civic District Hospital, where he was under treatment after a fall from a train on the Konkan line in Khed taluk.

His photo, released by the police, showed his face swollen on one side due to an injury. During preliminary questioning, it emerged that he is a resident of Shaheen Bagh in Delhi. Following this, a Kerala Police team visited the house and questioned his parents.

Speaking to reporters in Kannur, ADGP M R Ajith Kumar, who is overseeing the investigation, said it is too early to say whether more people were involved in the attack. There were unconfirmed reports that Saifi escaped from Kannur along with three others.

Lynching case: Punith Kerehalli, 4 associates nabbed in Rajasthan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

RIGHT-WING activist Punith Kerehalli, accused of lynching Idrees Pasha (39), driver of a cattle transport vehicle, in Sathanur police station limits near Bengaluru early Saturday morning, was arrested on Wednesday along with his four associates at Banswara in Rajasthan.

The police tracked him on Tuesday when Kerehalli posted a video on social media, accusing two former chief ministers of being in collusion with "cow" killers. CONTINUED ON: P5

The accused, after the incident, had taken the Belagavi route to escape first to Gujarat, and from there to Rajasthan

BR Ravikanthe Gowda, IGP (Central Range)

Right-wing activist Punith Kerehalli (centre) and his associates

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EXPRESS READ

CM: Will launch scheme in Maha villages

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has warned that if Maharashtra does not withdraw its health insurance scheme for people in border villages in Karnataka, then Karnataka will retaliate by rolling out a health insurance scheme for Kannadigas living in Maharashtra. P4

5 drown in TN temple lake during ceremony

Chennai: Five men who were taking part in a temple ritual at Moovarasampet Lake near Madipakkam in Chennai drowned in the water body on Wednesday morning. They were part of a group of 25, including priests, who had entered the lake to perform 'theerthavari' for the panguni uthiram festival of Dharmalingeshwarar Temple. P5

TS BJP chief held in SSC paper leak case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Warangal

IN a dramatic turn of events, Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar was arrested late on Tuesday at his residence in Karimnagar for allegedly 'hatching a conspiracy to circulate question papers of the ongoing SSC exams and defame the government'.

He was produced on Wednesday evening before First Class Magistrate R Anitha in Hanamkonda, who remanded him in judicial custody till April 19. Later, Sanjay was shifted to Karimnagar Jail from Warangal.

The BJP cadres took to the streets as news of Sanjay's arrest spread, and the ruling BRS termed the MP the 'mastermind' behind the leaks. P5

41% RISE IN CRIMES AGAINST SCs,STs IN K'TAKA IN 5 YEARS

KARTHIK K K @ Mysuru

KARNATAKA has seen a sharp rise in atrocities against the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the last five years despite the ST/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and other initiatives in place to prevent offences against members of these communities.

According to data from Karnataka State Police, the state has seen 41% increase in cases of crime against SCs and STs (by non-SCs and STs) over the last five years. In 2018, the state reported 1,536 cases and 1,585 in 2019. The increasing trend continued for the next three years, with the state reporting 1,691 cases in 2020 (despite Covid 19), 1,744 in 2021 and 2167 in 2022.

The increase in the number of cases from 1,536 in 2018 to 2,167 in 2022, which is nearly 41%, can be attributed to various factors. One of them is that the conviction rate in such cases is low. CONTINUED ON: P5

While most offences are of attack, attempt to murder and rioting, there are cases of murder, rape and molestation of SC/ST women

Former member, state-level vigilance and monitoring panel

STAR POWER

BJP gets 'Kiccha' Sudeep's campaign boost

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE ruling BJP in Karnataka got a boost with actor 'Kiccha' Sudeep on Wednesday declaring that he will campaign for the party for the Assembly elections.

The party hopes that the actor, who hails from the Valmiki (ST) community, can influence voters from the community, who are in large numbers in central and other parts of Karnataka. The actor, however, clarified that he will not join politics. "I am here to support Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and will campaign wherever he tells me to," he said.

He made this announcement at a press conference with Bommai. "I personally feel that many good things are happening in the country. This is again my perspective and has nothing to do with the party. As a responsible citizen and taxpayer, when some good things happen, I express my opinion. I respect PM Narendra Modi's leadership and decisions. This is my opinion and has nothing to do with me sitting here," he said.

Of the total population of Karnataka, the percentage of the Valmiki (ST) community is around 7, which is close to 43 lakh people. They are mainly concentrated in central Karnataka, including Ballari and Chitradurga districts. P5

CM Basavaraj Bommai with actor Sudeep in Bengaluru on Wednesday | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

I personally feel that many good things are happening in the country. This is again my perspective and has nothing to do with the party

'Kiccha' Sudeep

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